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SERMON DCLV.

BY REV. A. B. VAN ZANDT, D. D.

PETERSBURG, VA.

THE UNKNOWN DEPTHS OF DEPRAVITY.

"And Hazael said: But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing? And Elisha answered, The Lord hath showed me that thou shalt be king over Syria."—2 KINGS viii. 13.

"Know thyself!" was the concise maxim of ancient wisdom, but like many others, it is a maxim more easily uttered than obeyed. The true knowledge of ourself is, indeed, the most difficult of all human attainments; it is in fact, altogether beyond the reach of human attainments. A man may know something of himself, even as he may know something of external nature, and of his fellow-men. But in both cases, there is a limit beyond which he cannot go; there are hidden depths which he cannot penetrate. Especially in regard to his moral character, man is to himself an "unknowable individual." There are latent tendencies in his own heart, which may remain wholly unsuspected, until revealed, by an unlooked-for combination of circumstances, which shall call them into activity. It is on this account that men are so apt to misjudge themselves, and so prone to regard as harsh and unjust, the Scriptural account of human depravity. They will consent that the strong language of the Bible, may be true of some monsters of iniquity, but that it is true of fallen and unregenerated human nature, as such; that it has any just application to themselves, they wholly deny. They even wax indignant, when we take the words of Christ, and of his Apostles, as the exposition of their own depravity and guilt. And when we trace out the

lines of their spiritual paternity, and exhibit the extravagance of their amazing folly, in the rejection of Christ, and assure them, that in themselves they have no security against a descent into the lowest depths of degradation and crime, they exclaim with Hazeel, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" Now we would not needlessly disturb this self-complacency; we certainly would not do it, by any exaggerated representations of the inherent evil of the human heart. Nothing would be gained for the cause of truth and godliness, by painting the devil himself in darker colors than he wears, even if it were possible to do so. And yet it is the stale and standing charge against what is styled by ignorant witlings, a severe and sour Calvinism, that it delights to delineate human nature in the blackest lines, unrelieved by a single ray of love, or charity. But what could any system of doctrines possibly gain, except universal odium and detestation, by persisting in holding up such representations of human nature, if those representations were not true? It is not for the interest of any cause that would win the suffrages of men, to make them appear to themselves as worse than they really are. Satan sometimes plays a double game with sinners, and after having tempted them with flattering words, to great or long continued sin, he will turn and drive them to desperation, if he can, by persuading them that they are too bad to be forgiven. But by far his most frequent and successful effort is in the way of fostering the conviction, that they are too good to need forgiveness. The prevailing disposition of men is to think themselves better than they are. And as the faithful physician is often charged with unfeeling harshness, when urging the use of vigorous remedies, or even the amputating knife; he reveals the imminent danger of his patient; so, and with as little reason or justice, the faithful preacher of the word, is accused of delighting in denunciations, and exaggerating the moral malady of the soul, when he exhibits, from the word of God, its deep and damning depravity. If he had no remedy to propose, his representations, though truthful, might be regarded as needless, and his zeal, as wanton cruelty. But whilst, blessed be God! there is a remedy, yet such is man's inveterate aversion to it, that only the extremest sense of his need will bring him to consider and embrace that remedy. "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick," and as to an application of the remedy, it is all the same, whether a man is really whole, or only imagines himself to be so.

It is therefore of the first importance, that every man should at least so far know himself, as to be sensible of his own guilt and danger. Without this it is in vain that we speak of the remedy, for without this, there will be no application to the great physician of souls. It is not, then, in unkindness, but in love, that we lift the covering from that abyss of sin, the human heart; it is not in cynical bitterness, but in sorrow, that we point to its

festering corruption; it is not with curious, but with weeping eyes, that we explore its secret chambers, and bring to light its hidden vileness. May the Spirit of all grace, guide our thoughts, and succeed our effort, as we endeavor this day to exhibit one phase of depravity, as illustrated in that fragment of sacred story which we have selected for our text.

Hazael was prime minister to Benhadad, King of Syria, and his eventual accession to the throne of that kingdom had been made known to Elisha, to whom God had revealed his purpose of punishing the sins of Israel by his instrumentality. When in after years Elisha came to Damascus, Hazael was sent by his master, who was then ill, to consult the prophet respecting his recovery. The answer was, that the king might certainly recover. "Howbeit," added the prophet, "the Lord hath showed me that he shall surely die?" Then fixing his eye steadily upon Hazael, as if he would read his secret thoughts, the guilty officer of the king became confused, and betrayed his embarrassment, whereupon the man of God *wept*; and when Hazael had inquired the cause of this outburst of tears, Elisha replied, by describing the vivid picture then present to his own mind, of all the evils which the man now before him would inflict upon Israel. At this portrait of himself, Hazael exclaimed, "But what! Is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing?" The Prophet condescended to no further explanation than simply intimating, that, as king of Syria, he should do it. Hazael delivered to his master that part of the prophetic response which was intended for him; but the very next day, this man, cool and calculating in his ambition, took a thick cloth, and having dipped it in water, spread it over the face of the king, who in his feebleness, or in his sleep, was smothered by its weight, and died, what seemed to his people, a natural death. Having thus reached the throne, through the guilt of murder, Hazael made war upon Israel, and in a series of campaigns and victories, extending through forty years, he made good to the very letter, the appalling predictions of Elisha.

In considering the facts of this brief history, there are three points worthy of attention:—

I. Hazael knew that he was a wicked man, and that his tendencies were wicked. It is not improbable that his ambition had already suggested and entertained the purpose of the foul murder of Benhadad, which he afterwards committed. Perhaps this thought was in his mind when the Prophet told him that the king's malady was not mortal, but that he should nevertheless die. If so, it was the consciousness of his bloody purpose that made him quail under the searching glance of Elisha. He supposed himself in the presence of one who could read his thoughts, and with such thoughts in his heart, no wonder that he was confused. Those significant words, "*the Lord hath showed me that he shall*

surely die," and that steadfast gaze, penetrating to his inmost heart, would seem to him as the articulate utterance of his crime.

II. But though consciously guilty, Hazael did not know how wicked he was, and to what lengths of crime the evil tendencies would carry him. It was not a hypocritical affectation of horror when he replied to the prophet's prediction, "But what! Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" We believe that Hazael was really shocked at the contemplation of the crimes which the Prophet described. He could not conceive himself as guilty of such enormities, and he actually felt a glow of indignation at the supposition that he could possibly be capable of them. Nor is it difficult to reconcile this with the supposition that he was already meditating the murder of the king. That crime had grown familiar to his conscience. He had looked it in the face, under the influence of a dominant passion. His strong desire for the end to be obtained by it, had led him to consider all imaginable extenuations of its guilt. Benhadad was growing old and infirm. The vigor of his reign was past, and the kingdom needed a more active and energetic government. Though he should recover from this sickness, yet he could last but a few years at best. But then, in those few years, events might occur, which would put Hazael out of the succession. He might lose the favor of the king, or the favor of the people, and thus the golden prize which tempted his ambition might be lost to him forever. Was it not better, by a bold stroke, which might be given without detection, to grasp the crown, and actually benefit his country, by employing his superior talents in its government? By such sophistries as these his mind might have been brought to look upon this awful crime without shuddering, and though he quailed under the eye of the Prophet, when he supposed his secret purpose was known to him, yet it was the fear of discovery that discomposed him, rather than the guilt of his meditated crime. No doubt he felt relieved when Elisha did not mention the murder of the king, as among the causes of his tears. And no doubt he recoiled with unaffected horror, when he did mention those other enormities which he would perpetrate. He had succeeded in stupefying his conscience in regard to the first, but he had never yet contemplated, or been in a situation to look without aversion, upon the cruel and needless butchery of helpless women, and innocent children. Those were crimes not yet grown familiar to his thoughts and from which his conscience, though blood-stained already, yet shrank with instinctive horror.

III. But we notice, thirdly, that though honest in his recoil from the predicted atrocities, yet, as the event proved, he was capable of doing all, and more than all, that the prophet had said. The latent evil was in his heart, though as yet undeveloped in

this precise form and degree. It needed only the fitting circumstances of power, passion, and opportunity to make him, in fact, the "*dog*," the ravenous beast of prey, which he supposed Elisha's prediction to imply. The devil was in possession, and though he had not yet turned out every lingering remainder of conscience and sensibility, yet he had it all in subjection and could afford to take his time in bringing his deluded victim to the last degree of degradation and crime. The man had no power in himself to withstand the arts of that evil spirit who was leading him captive at his will. He was already the willing victim of the adversary, and it was a part of the infernal artifice of the destroyer to make him believe that, though up to a given point he had yielded, yet as to the rest he was free and need no further go. The deceitfulness of sin had so blinded his mind that he did not discover the truth, so constantly overlooked in the calculations of sinners, that in yielding one point all was yielded; that the heart owns no divided allegiance, but God or the devil must be enthroned in its supremacy. But let me not be misunderstood upon this point. I do not say that no evil passion or feeling will intrude into the heart where God reigns, nor yet that all amiable sensibility is destroyed and every generous impulse is excluded from the heart in which the devil is enthroned. The dominion of God in the regenerated soul, though at once supreme, yet is not at once complete. There may be lurking rebels in a conquered country, and though but one supreme authority is acknowledged, yet it may not be perfectly obeyed. In the renewal of the soul the dominion of sin is broken, but the extirpation of sinful habits requires sanctifying grace. And where the power of Satan is dominant in the soul it does not imply that a man is in all respects a devil, or that he is in every thought and feeling as bad as he might be. But this, at least, is true, and this is what we would affirm, that where the devil has possession he is supreme, and that when the heart is yielded to his dominion there is no assignable limit beyond which he may not carry the victim of his power in the career of sin and crime; and more than this, that the wilful, deliberate, and habitual rejection of God's authority, in any point, is itself a yielding up of the soul to the authority of the devil in every point. The rejection of God is subjection to the devil, and where the heart is under his dominion no sinner can know or fix the boundary of guilt beyond which he may not be carried.

Hazael found it so, and though he only intended to reach the throne by one act of murder, yet no sooner had he reached it than he dyed it crimson in the blood of the helpless. Restraints removed, opportunities offering, and passions inflamed, he became the "*dog*" he had indignantly designated the man who could do such things.

But it is not my purpose to detail the enormities perpetrated

by Hazeal or to dwell upon his character further than as an illustration of those facts in human depravity which it reveals, and which were not peculiar to him, but which are common to all men in their natural condition. Hazeal grasped a crown by the foulest murder, and mounted to the throne over the slain body of his master to wield the bloody sceptre of a vindictive and merciless tyrant. And, perhaps, you are ready to say, "What have we in common with such a man? How can his character illustrate our own?" As to his deeds you have nothing in common, and as to the prominent points of his character you have nothing. I am not preaching to blood-stained murderers, or exterminating tyrants. But there is an important point, because it is the radical point in which his character and yours unite, and do actually become one. You look upon the man and his deeds and you find in your hearts no sympathy with his crimes, but with instinctive aversion you brand him, in his own epithet, "a dog!" But I would have you look beyond his deeds to the source and spring of all his crimes, and then say, if you find no corresponding *fountain of iniquity* within your own breast. As yet it may have poured forth no such dark or crimson tides of guilt, perhaps it never will in this world. And, perhaps, those swelling floods are withheld *only* because you are *not* the eventual successor to Syria's throne, and because you are *not* Syria's king, in those days when Damascus was the pride of Syria and Syria the mightiest empire in the East. Say not in your indignation, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do these things!" lest in so saying you only help to complete the resemblance and point the moral which we seek to enforce.

Let us look at the facts :

1. Hazeal knew, when he uttered these words, that he was a wicked man, and that his tendencies were wicked. So do you, and so does every unrenewed man know the same. You may have no meditated murder upon your conscience or any other deed of darkness to make you quail under the eye of a fellow man. But you have the guilt of long continued and daring sin upon your conscience, and *there is* an eye before which you shrink abashed, and *there is* an accuser, sometimes sterner than the Hebrew prophet, whom you cannot confront. By familiarity with sin, it may have grown comparatively easy, and a stupefied conscience may give you little trouble, except an occasional twinge. But you know that you cannot stand before God in judgment and answer for one in a thousand of your sins, and the thought of that dread tribunal will, now and then, stimulate conscience to an unwonted activity and alarm your guilty fears. Your refuge, then, is in escaping reflection, or in soothing your apprehensions by extenuating your sins and magnifying your merits. You plead the infirmities of the flesh and the little harm you have

done ; you are not as bad as others ; you have maintained your integrity as a man, at least, you are *no hypocrite*, and exemption from that crime you hold as a high merit, if not as an actual indemnity for all your sins. But with it all you cannot escape the conviction that you are wicked, and your tendencies are wicked ; you have not rendered unto God the things which are God's ; you have trampled upon his authority ; you have broken his laws, and though sometimes troubled, you are not penitent for your sins, but persist in their practice. Sinner, is it not so ? Well, then, the first point is made out, and as we are not inquiring for the measure and degree of actual transgression but for the source and nature of sin, you must confess that you have this much in common with Hazael, namely, a wicked and depraved heart. But this is a main point, for if your conduct flows forth from the same polluted fountain, it implies a correspondence of character, though the streams of iniquity may not in both cases have proceeded to the same extent of evil.

2. But again, Hazael was a much worse man than he supposed himself to be, and capable of committing crimes at the prospect of which he shuddered. And so are you, and so are all unregenerated men far more wicked than they suppose, and capable of an excess of sin from which, under other circumstances, they would shrink with horror. The truth upon this subject is, no man knows himself until he is tried, every man finds himself more susceptible to the power of temptation than he had supposed, and any man, unrestrained by the power of divine grace, has no security that he shall not be carried away to the last extreme of vice and crime. "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?" "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." There are mournful and startling examples upon record, of grievous sins into which good men have fallen, and which stand as beacon-lights along the pathway of life, to warn away from temptation even the Christian who is unduly confident in himself. The penitential strains of Israel's bard have been fitly sung by many a saint recovered from his sin, and by it taught, as David was, to know his own weakness. But in the heart, unrenewed by divine grace, there are tendencies to evil which no man can limit or confine, by any boundaries which he himself shall erect. The barriers of education or the restraints of society may suffice, under favorable circumstances, but they will be swept away when temptation, opportunity, and passion combine to open the flood-gates of iniquity and pour out the gathered, but hidden wickedness of the heart. There was a time when even a Nero could exhibit some marks of sensibility, but the man who once wept at the execution of a felon, coolly plotted and executed the murder of his own mother, and reveled in fiendish delight in the destruction of his own capital, and the unprovoked slaughter of hun-

dreds and thousands of its citizens. The point I desire to impress is simply this, there is no assignable limit to the wickedness to which any man may be carried in whose heart the devil has possession. He may yet coolly perpetrate crimes at the suggestion of which he would now be indignant, and cry out with Hazael, "Is thy servant a dog?" But let him become king of Syria, in other words, let his present circumstances be changed, and power and opportunity concur, and he has no security that the indwelling devil will not be displayed in all the diabolical excesses of an incarnate fiend.

3. And in intimate connection with this is that other fact, that every heart in which God does not reign is under the dominion of the devil. He may not, as yet, have exterminated all its sensibilities. The sinner may never, in this world, become altogether a devil, but the latent evil is there, and it only waits its development to make him all that his inexorable master would have him to be.

SERMON DCLVI.

BY REV. EDMUND B. FAIRFIELD,

PRESIDENT OF HILLSDALE COLLEGE, HILLSDALE, MICHIGAN.

CHRISTIAN MEEKNESS HONORABLE.

"The discretion of a man deferreth his anger, and it is his glory to pass over a transgression."—PROVERBS xix. 11.

VERY diverse are the ideas which different men have conceived of honor; and various, accordingly, are the standards which have been adopted for the measurement of honorable conduct. The time has been when he who was most successful in pommeling the body of his fellow, or in inflicting the speediest and deadliest revenge for real or supposed injuries, was the applauded of surrounding thousands and the honored of a nation. The time is even yet when the conquering chieftain who has steeped the battle-field in the blood of his enemies, and who has rolled the widest and deepest wave of ruin over states and nations, returns to receive from enthusiastic millions his crown of glory.

Amid the various and, for the most part, degrading conceptions of the glory of man which have generally prevailed, the exalted morality of the text is most advantageously seen. Unregenerate men in their best estate have too often regarded revenge as

the mark of a noble spirit, and he who could brook insult and injury without attempting to call down vengeance upon the head of his enemy, has been esteemed ignoble, mean, and weak-minded. But how opposite the sentiment of the text—"It is the GLORY of a man to pass over a transgression!" That which impulsive man has reckoned a decisive mark of pusillanimity is thus avowed to be his highest and truest glory. And my object shall be, in a few words, to show that it is so.

It is in obedience to the highest dictates and noblest sentiments of the human soul. Humanity presents us with a strange compound of the animal and the spiritual; of passion, and propensity, and appetite on the one hand, and reason and conscience on the other. Which of these two classes of principles was designed to be supreme, and which subordinate, is evident as well from reason as from revelation; and which, as a matter of fact, has been subordinate, and which supreme, the history of man too sadly and clearly teaches. The fall of man has reversed the order which God established. Passion and animality have been exalted to the throne, and reason and spirituality have been stripped of the sceptre, and trampled in the dust. The dictate of passion is self-gratification; and that dictate is the law for unregenerate man—called in the Scriptures the law of the flesh. The dictates of the intelligence or of reason are in accordance with the teachings of the Spirit of the Almighty; and hence are spoken of by the Apostle as the law of the Spirit. When man exalts to the throne the mere animal propensities, he brutifies his soul, and infinitely degrades the lofty powers with which his Maker has endowed him. When he places the reins of government in the hands of conscience, and makes the soul pre-eminent over the body, he realizes the end for which God designed him. In breathing the spirit of revenge he does the former; in exercising meekness and forgiveness he does the latter. Then it is that he appears as man, and not as a beast. Then it is that he stands up in the dignity of his moral and spiritual nature, "a little lower than the angels and crowned with glory and honor." It is thus that he is shown to be possessed of true nobility by Heaven's own patent. Then does he most magnify his office as lord of creation, when it is seen that he can govern himself. Every passion is humbled into submission, and bows respectfully to the authority of that inner law which the finger of God has written upon the soul. When the cries of revenge for the blood of an enemy are hushed into silence, and the raging storm of the baser passions is quelled at the voice of command, then is seen the majesty of the divine in man. The spirit of retaliation springs indigenous in the human heart. No disposition is more strongly marked, or more universally prevalent. It is seen from the first opening development of the animal being, and, unextinguished by influences from above, it burns on till

death. Constant indulgence gives it strength. And when we see the man who displays such power of self-control and such a nobleness of spirit as are demanded to quell the risings of turbulent passion, and to conquer the power of inveterate habit, we mark it as a notable instance of self-government, and a memorable triumph of the spiritual over the animal nature. And as the soul is nobler than the body, and an angel more glorious than a beast, so is meekness nobler than revenge.

We cannot but admire and honor this nobility of spirit wherever exhibited; and this is itself a proof of the doctrine of the text. A meek and forgiving spirit is consonant with the noblest sentiments that ever found a home in the bosom of man, and cannot fail to awaken the highest respect. It is said of the renowned Henderson that the oldest of his friends never beheld him otherwise than calm and collected; it was a state of mind he retained in all circumstances. During his residence at Oxford, a student of a neighboring college, proud of his logical acquirements, was solicitous of a private disputation with the distinguished Henderson. Some mutual friends introduced him, and having chosen his subject, they conversed for some time with equal candor and moderation; but Henderson's antagonist perceiving his confutation inevitable, forgetting the character of a gentleman, and with a resentment engendered by his former arrogance, threw a glass full of wine in his face. Henderson, without altering his features, or changing his position, gently wiped his face, and then coolly replied, "*This, sir, is a digression; now for the argument!*" "All that is great and good in the universe is on the side of clemency and mercy." If we look into the history of mankind we shall find that in every age those who have been most respected *as truly worthy*, have been distinguished for this virtue. Revenge dwells in little minds; a noble and magnanimous spirit is superior to it. It has been beautifully said that "the greatest man on earth can no sooner commit an injury, than a good man may make himself greater by forgiving it."

Philip of Macedon was a king and a warrior. Such was the path of honor in his day. But his acts of moderation, when sometimes addressed in injurious and insulting language, were the most truly kingly of any that gave lustre to his reign. At the close of an audience which he gave to some Athenian ambassadors, who were come to complain of some act of hostility, he asked whether he could do them any service. "The greatest service thou couldst do us," said Demochares, "would be to hang thyself." Although the persons present were all of them highly offended at these words, Philip, with the utmost calmness of temper, made the following answer: "Go tell your superiors that those who dare make use of such insolent language are more haughty and less peaceably inclined than those who can forgive it." And we

cannot forbear thinking that if his son Alexander had displayed more of this clemency, he would have been far more deserving than he was of the appellation he bore.

But the sacred Scriptures furnish us more notable illustrations of this greatness of soul. The conduct of David in his treatment of Saul is a striking one. David had been anointed king, and well understood that he was to be the successor of Saul. He was exceedingly popular with the nation at large, and might with perfect impunity have taken the life of his enemy. Saul thirsted for his blood, and pursued him with deadly vengeance. David and his men were in a cave among the rocks of the wild goats in the wilderness of Engedi. Thither Saul with his three thousand men pursued after him. Unsuspicious of any immediate danger, the king turned aside into the very cave where David and his men were concealed. "And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do unto him as it shall seem good unto thee." Now observe the temptation. David anointed king, and destined to occupy the throne as soon as Saul was out of the way. Saul seeking his life. Himself sustained by the people. His enemy perfectly in his power. And his men using their best endeavors to induce him to put an end to his severe calamities of which Saul had been the sole author, *and quoting in support of their advice the word of the Lord!* Was ever such a cluster of temptations so nobly resisted, save in the history of the Son of David, the Saviour of the world? David merely drew near and cut off a part of Saul's robe, that he might give him a convincing proof of his own innocence. And even for this his tender conscience seemed afterwards to smite him. "And when Saul rose up out of the cave, David also rose up after him, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My Lord, the King! And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself. And David said unto Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, David seeketh thy hurt? Behold this day thine eyes have seen how that the Lord hath delivered thee to-day into mine hands in the cave; and some bade me kill thee; but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth my hand against my lord; for he is the Lord's anointed! Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand; for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not; know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it." Such is the boldness with which conscious innocence and virtue inspire their possessor. Scarcely could we find in the history of this king or any other a grander illustration than this of a truly heroic and magnanimous spirit. "Surely the discretion of a man deferreth his anger, and it is his glory to

pass over a transgression." And we are not surprised that even Saul's stern heart was deeply moved by such an exhibition of magnanimity and clemency; and that, "when David had made an end of speaking these words unto him, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil." Strange that so soon after this there should have been occasion for another manifestation on the part of David of the same noble spirit. But so it was. Saul and his three thousand pursued him again. He was by a deep sleep thrown into the power of David. And Abishai asked only that he should be allowed to smite him once, with the promise that he would not smite him again. But no. "David said to Abishai, Destroy him not. As the Lord liveth, the Lord shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall descend into battle and perish. The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed." Repeated and malicious persecutions could not embitter his heart, nor stir him up to vindictive measures. Noble man! A king indeed! "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

The prayer of the dying Stephen is a sublime illustration of the highest glory to which man may attain. "Lay not this sin to their charge," is a prayer for one's murderers which never could have proceeded but from a heart beating full in sympathy with him who on the cross of Calvary lifted his dying cry—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." It could only be the prayer of him who not *once* merely saw the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God, but who had daily intercourse with the unseen world, who lived as seeing him who is invisible, and like Enoch walked with God. And this is the true secret of such meekness of spirit, and such self-subjection as our subject contemplates. It is the realization of the Divine existence, and an unwavering confidence in the integrity of the Divine character and of the Divine government, that can allay effectually the spirit of revenge, and leave to the King of kings and the Judge of all the vindication of our rights, and the redress of our wrongs. Hence even Michael when contending with the devil, did not bring a railing accusation against him, but only said, "The Lord rebuke thee." And hence the fitness of the inspired exhortation, "Beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil; but overcome evil with good."

And yet we are not to understand that the Divine mind, in the

administration of law, exercises a vindictive spirit, or retaliates even upon the humblest of his creatures, the wrongs they have done. Far, far from it. On the contrary, the character and conduct of God furnish us with infinitely the highest illustration of the doctrine of the text, and the mightiest motive to embody it in our lives. Mercy is Jehovah's darling attribute; judgment is his strange work; and never at all is it entered upon, except upon the demand of infinite benevolence itself, and in no case from the impulses of revenge. And what is the glory of the Creator, may surely be esteemed the highest honor of the creature. The noblest impulses and the highest conceptions of the human mind; the greatness of the greatest of earth, the greatness of angel and archangel, are on the side of meekness and clemency. But all these vanish into infinite littleness when contrasted with the greatness of him who is the Maker of them all. We often place before us the example of the good and the great, that by contemplation, our characters may become assimilated to theirs. We think it an honor to be like such: how much more to be like God. The best advice which the heathen stoic philosopher Epicetus could give to his pupils was this: "Propose to yourself the example of wise and good men, whether alive or dead; and compare your conduct with theirs. When you are going to confer with any one, represent to yourself how Socrates or Zeno would behave in such a case, and you will not be at a loss to make a proper use of whatever may occur." But with the light of divine revelation shining upon us, we discern another and a higher way cast up for us, and the voice from Heaven speaks to us—"Be ye followers of God."

And here we discover the footsteps of Him who was "God manifest in the flesh," and who, "when he was reviled, reviled not again." We are taught not merely by precept, but by example, that the wisdom which is from above, is full of mercy. We behold Immanuel, amid the death-groans of Calvary, crying in his agony, while the rocks were rent around him, and heaven and earth were bearing witness to his Divinity, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Here was displayed the transcendent glory of the Godhead! Surely it is the glory of A MAN to pass over a transgression. A gentleman once went to Sir Eardly Wilmot, Lord Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, exceedingly angry and indignant in view of an injury which he had received from a person high in the political world, and which he was meditating how to resent in the most effectual manner. After relating the particulars, he asked the Chief Justice if he did not think it would be manly to resent it. "Yes," said the knight, "it will be *man-like* to resent it; but it will be *God-like* to forgive it." The gentleman declared that this had such an instantaneous effect upon him, that he came away a different man and in a very different temper from that in which he

went. And I have only to add to this beautiful remark, that that only which is God-like is in the truest and highest sense *manly*.

But enough, perhaps, thus far, for the illustration of the doctrine of the text: and your attention is invited to a few thoughts suggested by it.

1. *We see how strong and convincing is the internal evidence of the Bible.* The very nature of its doctrines proves them to be from Heaven. Such a sentiment as that of my text never fell from the lips of any philosopher or moralist unacquainted with the sacred Scriptures. A sceptical lawyer, of considerable eminence, in New England, was some years since induced by a friend of his to commence the examination of the truth of the Christian Religion.* After concluding, lawyer-like, to enter upon the investigation of the subject, he inquired of a pious acquaintance of his who was also a lawyer—"What books, sir, would you advise me to read on the evidences of Christianity?" "The Bible," said the other. "I believe you do not understand me," said the sceptic; "I wish to investigate the *truth* of the Bible." "I would advise you, sir," repeated his Christian friend, "to read the Bible, and," continued he, "I will give you my reasons. Most infidels are very ignorant of the Scriptures. Now, to reason on any subject with correctness, we must understand what it is about which we reason. And in the next place, I consider the internal evidence of the Scriptures stronger than the external." "And where shall I begin," inquired the unbeliever, "at the New Testament?" "No," said the other, "at the beginning—at Genesis." The infidel accordingly began; liked many things and some he disliked. After he had read as far as through the 20th chapter of Exodus, the Christian lawyer called upon him one evening, and found him at home walking his room, with a dejected look, his mind apparently absorbed in thought. He continued, not noticing that any one had come in, to trace and retrace his steps. His friend at length spoke:—"You seem, sir, to be in a brown study. Of what are you thinking?" "I have been reading," replied the infidel, "THE MORAL LAW." "Well, what do you think of it?" asked his friend. "I will tell you what I *used* to think," answered the infidel. "I supposed that Moses was the leader of a horde of banditti; that, having a strong mind, he acquired great influence over a superstitious people; and that on Mount Sinai he played off some sort of fire works, to the amazement of his ignorant followers, who imagined, in their mingled fear and superstition, that the exhibition was supernatural." "But what do you think now?" interposed his friend. "I have been looking," said the infidel, "into the nature of that law. I have been trying so see whether I can add any thing to it, or take any thing from it, so as to make it

* Tracts of the American Tract Society, No. 321.

better. Sir, I cannot. It is *perfect*." He then proceeded to enumerate the ten Commandments, showing their appropriateness, and analyzing with legal acuteness, the nature of each and the classification of the whole, and proceeded :—"I have been thinking of this question, WHERE DID MOSES GET THAT LAW?" I have read history : the Egyptians, and the adjacent nations were idolaters ; so were the Greeks and Romans ; and the wisest and best Greeks and Romans never gave a code of morals like this. *Where did Moses get this law*, which surpasses the wisdom and philosophy of the most enlightened ages ? He lived at a period comparatively barbarous ; but he has given a law in which the learning and sagacity of all subsequent time can detect no flaw. Where did he get it ? He could not have soared so far above his age as to have devised it himself. I am satisfied where he obtained it. It must have come from Heaven. I am convinced of the truth of the religion of the Bible." The infidel—an infidel no longer—remained to his death a firm believer in the truth of Christianity. And a thousand things which are found in this book of books infinitely transcend in the grandeur of their morality, the noblest sentiments that were ever incorporated in heathen systems of law, philosophy, or ethics. Revenge was generally regarded as the mark of a noble spirit, and inculcated in their systems of morals. Where, then, did Solomon, who lived before the times of Plato, or Socrates, Zeno, or Aristotle, Crysippus, or Epictetus, Cicero, or Seneca, and in a more uncivilized and barbarous age, (but for the influence of the Old Testament Scripture,) where did he get that exalted God-like morality, that sets it forth as "the glory of a man to pass over a transgression?" Before the infidel can have answered such a question he will be compelled to renounce his infidelity and embrace the Bible.

2. *We see also the absurdity of that Theology that extols the New Testament but discards the Old.* Error is always blind, and frequently most grossly absurd and inconsistent. Of which fact a better illustration could not be found than that before us. The Old Testament not inspired ? Then was the eminent lawyer referred to, deluded after all. For he had only proceeded through its first pages, when he was convinced of its divine origin. And surely he could not have proceeded farther than to the words selected for the text, before incredulity itself would have yielded. We have heard a man who could enlarge eloquently upon the glorious doctrines of the New Testament, and especially that of forgiveness, and yet in the same sentences pour out his anathemas upon the Old Testament Scriptures, hurling them from their place in the book of God to dwell with the Koran or the Hindoo Shasters. Did he forget that there is not on any page of the Bible a more beautiful and sublime expression of that very doctrine than the one contained in the text ? "It is the glory of a man to pass over a transgression." There is nowhere to be found a more ex-

alted morality than that contained in the Old Testament; nor is there a single duty to God or man contained in the New Testament, which is not found in the Old. God has not grown more holy or benevolent since the days of Moses or Solomon. And be it remembered that every commendation of the Scriptures uttered by Christ, or the Apostles, must have referred primarily to the Old Testament, as the New was not then in existence.

3. *How different are the ideas of many worldly men in respect to honor from those inculcated in the text.* They think it honorable to deal out vengeance upon the head of him who insults or injures them, and, cowardly to pass it over;—glorious to retaliate—inglorious to forgive. But far different are the teachings of Solomon, and of the Spirit of the Almighty, that gave him understanding. "The things which are highly esteemed among men are abomination in the sight of God." Heaven's views of honor not often tally with those of earth. Whose sympathy and approval, then, shall we prefer—God's or men's? Shall we rank ourselves in association with the baser passions, or the nobler faculties of the human soul? Shall we aspire to receive the appellation of honorable and spirited which vindictive and selfish men may bestow, or shall we seek alliance with the Almighty, and with the lofty-minded spirits that encircle his throne?

4. *Men often greatly mistake in supposing that revengeful and malignant passions really commend them even to their fellows.* The soul has been enslaved to the body; and reason and conscience subjected to the dominion of passion and lust; yet they submit *with a protest*. Conscious of their enslavement, and convicted of their degradation, they are compelled to pay homage, however reluctant it may be, to that character in which the soul maintains its supremacy. Even in a dark age, and surrounded by a heathenism in which were embodied the most debasing views of man's dignity and destiny, the Apostle could say—"We commend ourselves to every man's *conscience* in the sight of God." And there is especially in the bosom of every one reared under the influences of Christian civilization, the germ of loftier sentiments than those which commonly appear upon the surface of life—a germ which is ready upon a favorable opportunity to develop itself in its beauty and strength. Wicked men often fear to do right, lest contempt and scorn should fall upon them. But their fears are groundless. Let a man boldly face the popular sentiment where it is wrong, and it is not in depravity itself not to approve. It is said of the marquis De Valaze, and the count De Merci (two French noblemen), that having been educated together, they were reputed, amongst all who knew them, to be patterns of friendship, honor, and courage. For many years they had enjoyed each other's society without a rupture. But one unfortunate evening, after indulging freely in the use of wine, they went to a public-house, and engaged for amusement in a game of

backgammon. The marquis on the one hand was constantly successful, and the count on the other deeply chagrined on account of his ill-success. The marquis exulted with laughter, at his good fortune; and the count, still unsuccessful, lost his temper, became infuriated, and threw the box and dice in the face of his brother soldier. The whole company in the room were in amazement, and every gentleman present waited with impatience for the moment in which the marquis would sheath his sword in the bosom of the count. "Gentlemen," cried the marquis, "I am a Frenchman, a soldier, and a friend. I know and I acknowledge the laws of honor, and will obey them. Every man who sees me wonders why I am tardy in putting to death the author of my disgrace. But, gentlemen, the heart of that man is entwined with my own. Our days, our education, our temperaments, and our friendships are coeval. But, gentlemen, I will obey the laws of honor and of France; I will stab him to the heart." So saying, he threw his arms around his unhappy friend, and said, "My dear de *Merci*, I forgive you, if you will deign to forgive me for the irritation I have given to a sensitive mind, by the levity of my own." The pardon of the count was sealed by the embraces of the marquis. The king gave them a new honor in knighthood, and their noble conduct was greatly applauded by the company present, who felt that to "err was human; to forgive divine." And if a magnanimity like this, exercised toward a *friend*, does not fail to excite our admiration, how vastly deeper and purer is the homage of the soul for that nobler magnanimity which pardons a stranger and an enemy.

5. And this leads me to remark *a word upon the disgracefulness of duels*. It is called honorable with some (alas! that it should be said in a Christian land), when a man has received what he terms an insult, to avenge it, and redeem his character by shooting the insulter. Honorable for two men, *great men*, to shoot each other with muskets, pistols, or rifles! *Honorable!* Honorable for a man to forget that higher nature with which his Maker has endowed him, and by which he is distinguished from the brute, and to subject himself slavishly to the control of the basest animal passions! *Honorable* for a man to become a beast! Why then would it not be still more honorable to be furnished with all the weapons of offence and defence which belong to the animal race—horns, claws, and tusks. *Honorable!* One almost nauseates at the thought of belonging to the human family, when he remembers what creatures some have been who wore the human form and claimed a common descent from our great progenitor. *Honorable!* It is false. It is a libel on human nature. It is a shameful reproach upon the Christian religion, the American people, and upon an enlightened age. Even Julius Cæsar, the Roman General and Statesman, who was born a hundred years before the Christian era, who lived and died a worshipper of heathen

gods, and who is most known as the destroyer of his country's liberties and the great usurper of power and dominion in his native Rome—even he could teach a lesson of honor to some of our modern sages. For when he received a challenge from Anthony to engage him in single combat, he very calmly answered the bearer of the message, "If Anthony is weary of life, tell him there are other ways to death than the point of my sword." Who ever deemed this an instance of cowardice? Caesar was not a coward. All ages have admired this conduct as the act of a discreet and gallant man, who was sensible of his own importance, and knew how to treat the petulant and revengeful humor of a discontented adversary with deserved contempt. Duelling honorable! A more shameful, puerile, childish scene was never witnessed. Think of it. Two of our hot bloods at Washington, or New York, take offence at each other, in view of some supposed insult (and this is childish enough)—a challenge must be sent and accepted—arrangements are made, and they come together and *shoot* at each other—which being done, their honor is vindicated, and friendship is restored. If any thing heinously wicked *could* be supremely ridiculous, such a sight must be. And the law which requires all this between gentlemen is called the "*code of honor*." IT IS THE CODE OF SHAME.

6. *Our subject teaches us how to appreciate the talk about insults, of which there is so much in the world.* Men are very much afraid of passing over an insult. But if they were willing to learn wisdom of the wisest of men, and of the infinitely wise God, the text would assure them that to pass over both insult and injury is their highest glory. True feelings of *self-respect*, to say nothing of Christian principle, would place them above insults. It was the remark of Lord Chesterfield, if I mistake not—that he never would be insulted. Because if a man did not mean to insult him, of course he would not take it as an insult—that would be ungenerous. And if he did mean to insult him, he would not be insulted by him—he was unworthy of notice. In his concise phrase "no gentleman WILL insult me, and no other CAN." A man should have too high a sense of self-respect, too high a regard for his own dignity, *to condescend to be insulted*. And more, the man who is always ready to feel an insult, will always find enough who are willing to offer it. There are many who will insult you, if you are ready to be insulted; but if you are resolved not to be, men will respect you too much to attempt it.

7. Finally, we are taught *how we may settle honorably the various little disputes which arise between us and our fellow men.*—all cases of slander and abusive conduct not excepted. And this is truly a great desideratum. Men are very desirous of settling *honorably* the numberless difficulties that may arise between them and others, and not knowing how to do it, they are oftentimes in a dilemma. Now, from this, my text perfectly and for

ever relieves them. It gives the most perfect and only true code of honor any where to be found. And its beauty is that it speaks not of fictitious but of real honor. "It is the glory of a man to pass over a transgression." The most pacific mode of settling our difficulties is at the same time the most honorable. To bear an injury is infinitely more honorable than to revenge it. And could we induce the world thus to believe, and thus to practice, what a Paradise would it become! No longer would it be the Acel-dama which it has hitherto been, but by a magic transformation it would become as the garden of Eden for beauty and delight.

SERMON DCLVII.

BY REV. JONATHAN GREENLEAF,

BROOKLYN, N. Y.

THINGS THAT CANNOT BE SHAKEN.

"Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."—HEBREWS xii. 26, 27.

IN scripture phraseology the *earth* is often by a figure put for earthly or worldly things, such as worldly governments, temporal policies, and human institutions; while the phrase *heaven* represents religious things, mainly such as are external, such as the forms of religion, external church order, and the like. It was no doubt in this sense that our Lord used these terms in predicting the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and the breaking up and scattering of the Jewish people and church: "*Heaven and earth,*" said he "*shall pass away;*" declaring in this way the subversion of the ancient polity, both political and ecclesiastical, and the bringing in of another dispensation. It seems most probable that we are to understand the expressions of the text in this way: "*Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.*" The Apostle had just alluded to the terrific displays of God's power on Mount Sinai, when his voice shook the earth, so that even Moses said, "*I do exceedingly fear and quake,*" and now he declares that once more not earth only but heaven shall also be shaken; alluding probably here to the prophecy of Haggai, which was uttered in reference to the coming of Christ, wherein he says, "*Thus saith the Lord of hosts, yetonce it is a little while and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the*

sea, and the dry land. And I will shake all nations: for the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory."

These remarks will assist us to a right understanding of our text. Great changes are predicted as taking place in the earth, both in the political and moral world, both in regard to the state and to the church, showing the instability of all things temporal, and the ultimate destruction of the powers which uphold them; and then bringing into view an entirely different state of things, a kingdom which cannot be moved, and things which can never be shaken.

In the contemplation of these two things we may be instructed.

I. From the beginning of the world to this day a scene of revolution and change has been exhibited on the earth, so that we can look to no point and say, see this is abiding, for mutability is inscribed on all things beneath the sun. Consider the ancient kingdoms among men, and where are they? They are gone—all gone—and many of them are now as though they had never been. Where is now Assyria, and Babylon its capital, once the mistress of the world, sitting as queen amid the nations, and seeing no sorrow, being decked with fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and gold, and precious stones, and pearls, while her merchandise was most precious, and all the merchants of the earth flocked thither? Where is she now? and what is her state? Ah! she is lost. Her sins reached unto heaven, and God remembered her iniquities, and rewarded her as she rewarded his people, filling double into her cup, as she did to others. Her great riches have come to nought, and her glories have expired in darkness. As a millstone is sunk in the waters, so Babylon is lost, and the very place of it can no more be found.

Egypt was once a mighty kingdom, and famous among the nations, but the sins and idolatries of the people provoked the Lord, and he gave them over to their enemies, till they were trodden down, and made base. Their princes became fools, and their counsellors brutish.

And there was Tyre also, once a "*joyous city*," a "*crowning city*," whose merchants were princes, and whose traffickers were the honorable of the earth. But Tyre sinned against the Lord, and he stretched his hand over her in vengeance, till her multitudes melted away, and her fine buildings and stately palaces have given place to a few rough rocks where the fisherman dries his nets.

Nor have the kingdoms of Media, and Persia, and Grecia, which were shown to Daniel in the visions of the ram and the rough goat, met any gentler doom. When they magnified themselves against the God of heaven, he shook them in pieces until they were destroyed, and all that can now be found of them is

but the ghost of what they were. More modern nations have shared a similar fate, for where God has not been acknowledged, or his word neglected, or his people persecuted, there his vengeance has come down, and the vials of his wrath have been poured out. There is very good reason for believing, that the revolutions and commotions of the nations of the earth, at the present day, are among the events predicted to occur at the pouring out of the vials of God's wrath upon a sinful world. The elements of combustion seem to be fast accumulating among the nations of Europe, like some vast subterranean mine, or some hidden volcano, laboring to find vent, and kept back perhaps only by new materials thrown in, which are hardly yet in a state of fusion. The crackling of the concealed fire is heard, the ground trembles beneath the tread of its inhabitants, and yet a little while, and the fearful irruption will take place, and for the sins of those nations God will shake them to their foundation. And then, we have good reason to believe, will come the great battle of the day of God Almighty, spoken of in the Revelation, when the Beast and the false Prophet shall be taken, and shall be cast together into the lake, burning with fire and brimstone.

One of our leading politicians,* referring to the present stormy aspect of things in Europe, expresses himself in the following striking language :

"It has seemed to me as if the prerogative of crowns, and the rights of men, and the hoarded-up resentments and revenges of a thousand years, were about to unsheath the sword for a conflict, in which the blood shall flow as in the Apocalyptic vision, to the bridles of the horses, and in which a whole age shall pass away—in which the great bell of time shall sound for another hour—in which society itself shall be tried by fire and steel—whether it is of nature, and of nature's God, or not."

The question is an important one whether our own country will share in those punishments which are coming down upon the ungodly. We are indeed a very sinful people, and deserving of God's wrath; but there is still one encouraging circumstance: This nation has never formed any part of that power known in the Scriptures as "*the Beast*," meaning undoubtedly the papal empire; it has never been, in any sense, the "*little horn*," spoken of by Daniel, which persecuted the Church of God, and wore out the saints of the Most High. So long as we keep clear of this we may hope to be exempted from those desolating judgments by which a righteous God will punish those nations who have yielded themselves as instruments for the "*man of sin*."

In many other things great changes are taking place, and God in his providence is shaking every human institution, and thus showing that mutability is inscribed on every thing beneath the

* Hon. Rufus Choate.

sun. Societies, and various combinations of men, formed for the best of purposes, do not always accomplish the thing desired, and they are changed and modified by their friends; and they even sometimes become the instruments of evil, and the providence of God hedges them in. So too constitutions of civil government and laws change, and in very deed God shakes not earth only but heaven, signifying, as saith the text, "*the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.*" The contemplation of these is now before us; and we inquire —

II. What are the things which cannot be shaken?

To this inquiry we answer—

1. The purposes of God will never be shaken. He is in one mind, and none can turn him aside. Jehovah possesses perfect knowledge, and does not purpose or determine any thing without a full understanding of its propriety and suitableness for the end in view; and thus, with its results before him, he purposes to bring it to pass. The pleasure of God is the only rule of his purposes, and his own glory the sole end proposed, and hence every part, whether minute or more important, is established on an unshaken basis, planned in his own eternal mind, and rendered subservient to the accomplishment of certain fixed ends. With men it is wholly different. They resolve on certain acts in view of certain contingencies; but the contingency may change, or wholly fail, and the action changes of course. But with God it is not so. As he can commit no mistake in willing or purposing, so he cannot change, nor can his purposes ever be shaken.

2. The reasons of God's moral government, or the laws of his kingdom will never be shaken, or changed. In human governments the laws are continually changing, because the circumstances of the people vary, and a law that is proper now, becomes inexpedient or improper hereafter. Hence arises the enactment of new laws, the additions to some that remain, and the total repeal of others. Such is the employment of legislatures from year to year. But no such thing can happen in the government of Jehovah. The reason why he prohibits sin can never alter. It was ever opposed to his holy nature, and ever will be, and hence the reason, for his law can never cease, and the law itself can never change. So of holiness; it was the same thing in the beginning as now; and the law which required men to love God with all their heart can never change, because the holy nature of God can never change, and he will never cease to be a pure and holy Being, and deserving of the love of all his rational offspring. The laws promulgated to Adam in Paradise, so far as they went into detail, were in accordance with those given to Moses on Mount Sinai, and these again were sanctioned by our Lord, and repeatedly laid down by his apostles. Thus the law of God is one from

the beginning. It changes not, and is one of the things which can never be shaken.

3. The foundation of the Church of Christ is one of those things which can never be shaken. Figures are used in the Scriptures to represent it, but they are all figures of durability and power. "*On this rock will I build my church,*" said our Lord, "*and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" Christ is the foundation of his Church, the corner-stone on which the building stands; and though the rain should descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon the building, it will not fall, for it is founded upon a rock. The prophet speaks of this foundation, as a stone laid in Zion, "*a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation.*" Paul speaks of it as a glorious temple—"*Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.*" And then again it is represented as some noble tree planted by the rivers of water, whose roots pierce to the centre, whose top reaches to heaven, while its boughs, laden with goodly fruit, are extended to the utmost limits of the world. Thus the Church of God on earth is a permanent institution, having its foundation laid in the atonement made by the Divine Redeemer, and never to be overturned by all the convulsions of the world. It is, most strictly speaking, "*a kingdom which cannot be moved.*" Human governments will be overturned, and the revolutions and convulsions of the nations will in time subvert the strongest; and some things in the external form of the church may be varied, but the thing itself will stand, and survive the destruction of the world.

4. The promises and threatenings of God's word will never be changed. From the beginning Jehovah has expressed his purposes of mercy toward his people in "*exceeding great and precious promises,*" promises which have regard to the life which now is, as well as to life which is to come. These promises are substantially alike in every age of the world. They are expressed in various forms, and accommodated to various characters, but the amount of the whole is an assurance of glory, honor and peace, to every man that worketh good, "*to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.*" These promises were not one thing to-day, and another thing to-morrow, one thing under this dispensation, and another thing under that; they were not in this respect, yea and nay, as Paul terms it, meaning by this that they were not couched in equivocal language, sometimes a promise, and then a threatening; but adds the Apostle—"*As God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Sylvanus, and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.*" The threatenings issued against sin bear also one uniform character. Sin was always that evil and bitter thing which God hated: it always aimed at his throne; it

was always contrary to his law, and it consequently was always forbidden under the same penalties, and threatened with the same divine wrath. The language of God, concerning it, has ever been uniform, nothing less than "*indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.*" Thus both the promises and the threatenings of God's word are alike permanent, and are among the things that shall never be shaken.

5. The ultimate security of God's people, and the final triumph of his cause on earth, are also among those permanent things on which we may safely rely. The love which God bears to his people is an unchangeable love, and having loved his own he loves them to the end. The new nature which is implanted by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the ransomed, is in fact a divine nature and cannot be lost. Like the rising of the morning it never goes out in darkness, but shines brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. Hence the security of God's people. The world may be in revolution, and every thing beneath the sun may be shaken, but their salvation is sure—God has engaged for them, and they will not fail. The same power secures the final victory to the cause of religion on earth. Many enemies are round about the Church, but "*God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.*" No weapon can ultimately prosper that is raised against the Church. Many make war with the Lamb, but the Lamb shall overcome them, and come off victorious over all his foes.

Such are some of the things which can never be shaken: The purposes of God, the reasons of his moral government, the laws of his kingdom, the foundation of his Church, the promises and threatenings of his word, the final salvation of his people, and the ultimate security of his kingdom, all are things that can never be shaken. They are permanent, and they will stand when the world and all which it inherits shall dissolve.

In view of this whole subject, we may well rejoice that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Amid the convulsions of the world he sits supreme in the heavens, swaying an universal sceptre, and overruling the commotions of the nations to the advancement of his own glory. How safe are all things under his control. Fear not, ye people of God, for though the waves of worldly revolutions roar around you, Jehovah is above them all, and his kingdom shall stand, and his people will assuredly be saved.